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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1315  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1492  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 1739  
RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA 1773  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0618  
RUEPADJ/CJTF-HOA J2X CAMP LEMONIER DJ  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ASMARA 000316

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TAGS: PREL PINR MOPS KPKO UNSC ER ET SO

SUBJECT: SOMALI MPS IN ERITREA DISCUSS VIEWS AND FUTURE PLANS

Classified By: AMB. Scott H. DeLisi for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On March 17, Poloff met with Abdiadir Dakane and Abdirahma "Ibbi" Haji Adan, both supporters of the former Somali Speaker Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan and one of the 42 members of parliament (MPs) of the Transitional Federal Government that fled Somalia in recent months. Calling themselves the Free Parliamentary (or Patriotic) Wing, Ibbi and Abdiadir expressed a strong Somali nationalism and stated their goal of building an alliance with moderate members of the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC). They characterize TFG President Yusuf's continued presidency unpalatable but politically necessary. However, the MPs would like to see the following changes within the TFG: Sheikh Adan reinstated as Speaker; Prime Minister Gedi replaced with a moderate CIC figure from the Hawiye clan; and Somalia's laws modified to allow moderate CIC members to occupy ministerial positions. Ibbi and Abdiadir stated that Sheikh Adan is planning to meet with Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed in either Yemen, Qatar or United Arab Emirates within the next ten days. Eritrea, meanwhile, with its support to both the CIC and TFG-opposition politicians, seems to be setting itself ever more squarely in opposition to its east African neighbors on the issue of Somalia ) a course that could seriously exacerbate regional tensions. End Summary.

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ETHIOPIA SHOULD LEAVE SOMALIA  
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¶2. (C) Ibbi and Abdiadir stated that the continuing occupation by Ethiopia was creating animosity among the Somali people, although both grudgingly admitted that the invasion had rid the country of the extreme Islamists heading the CIC. Abdiadir claimed that Ethiopian troops could now depart Somalia without creating a vacuum since the warlords were too weak to take over and the CIC has lost the support of the Somali people and the business community.

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BUT REGRETTABLY YUSUF MAY HAVE TO STAY  
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¶3. (C) The MPs noted that President Yusuf had "sold the

country". Dubbing him the "Charles Taylor of Somalia", Abdi Kadur claimed Yusuf was motivated by greed and revenge for events that had occurred under the presidency of Siad Barre. As long as President Yusuf remains in control, Somalia will see a steady increase in violence ) in particular in suicide bombers, proliferation of weapons and violence against women. Nonetheless, due to his important clan connections, both felt that Yusuf would need to remain in the position of President.

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MAKING NICE WITH THE CIC MODERATES  
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¶4. (C) Ibbi and Abdi Kadur declared their support for engaging the moderate elements in the CIC and their hopes for creating an alliance with them. Although professing enmity toward the CIC's radical wing, they claimed that the local people, especially in Mogadishu, nonetheless prefer the radicals to President Yusuf. The MPs claimed to be in contact with CIC moderates in Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Somalia, commenting that the involvement of the CIC in the political process will be critical to establishing stability in Somalia. When asked about potential risks in allying themselves with the CIC, Abdi Kadur noted "The CIC is changed now. We have changed them. They are not as strong as they were."

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RETURNING TO SOMALIA ... AND PARLIAMENT  
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¶5. (C) Ibbi said that for the disenfranchised MPs to return to Somalia, Ethiopian troops would need to depart. He

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expressed support for an AU peacekeeping mission, specifically for the involvement of Nigeria and Burundi. He noted that while the MPs continue to support the mandate of the Transitional Federal Government as the legitimate government, they would like to see Sheikh Adan reappointed as the Speaker of Parliament and Prime Minister Gedi replaced by a moderate CIC representative from the same Hawiye clan as Gedi. They also would like modifications to the Somali laws which would allow for non-parliamentary members, i.e. moderate CIC representatives to be appointed to ministerial positions.

¶6. (C) Ibbi and Abdi Kadur appeared unconcerned about the recent decree calling for their removal from parliament if they do not return to Somalia within the next 30 days. Ibbi explained that they had already identified replacements for themselves from their own clans. He added that while the 42 MPs in exile currently promote a non-violent political agenda, their removal from parliament might lead them to take up a more confrontational and potentially violent approach to the TFG.

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ERITREA -- A SAFE PLACE FOR EXILES  
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¶7. (C) Following their January expulsion from Kenya and a short stay in Djibouti, the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) granted the supporters of Sheikh Adan "safe haven" in Eritrea. Ibbi identified Yemane Gebremeskel in the GSE Office of the President as one of their key Eritrean contacts, noting "he even speaks Somali." The MPs stated that they were unaware of any CIC members in Eritrea, certainly, they were not aware of the presence of any of the moderate elements with whom they were seeking dialogue. Poloff informed Ibbi that the Ambassador was hoping to meet with Sheikh Adan to hear his views firsthand. Ibbi stated he would need to discuss it with the Sheikh as well as check with the Eritreans first. Ibbi advised Poloff that the U.S. "should see Eritrea as strategically important" and failure to do so would "create a lot of mess."

BUT NO REST FOR THE WEARY

¶8. (C) As of Saturday, March 17, at least 20 MPs - including Sheikh Adan and former Prime Minister Mohammad Abdi Yusuf - were guests at GSE expense at the Ambassoira Hotel in Asmara.

With six more supporters scheduled to arrive on March 18, the group planned to remain in Eritrea until March 21. From Eritrea, they plan to travel to Qatar, UAE and possibly Yemen before traveling to Italy and then onto London where they plan to meet with supporters and members of the Somali diaspora on March 29. Where they will travel from London will depend on the outcomes of the meetings over the next few weeks.

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COMMENT  
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¶9. (C) Although Embassy Asmara has not been at the center of Somali policy issues, the growing presence of various Somali players has led us to reach out to those willing to meet with us. As we do so we will welcome continuing guidance from Embassy Nairobi and Department. Of course, our engagement depends on the GSE allowing the Somalis to meet with us ) seemingly an unlikely proposition at this point. The GSE continues to keep the Somalis in Eritrea largely under wraps, particularly those with CIC ties (and we believe them to be here despite Ibbi's professed lack of knowledge). The GSE also disavows what most others commonly accept ) its ongoing logistical/substantive support for CIC elements (septel). The GSE makes no effort, however, to hide its rhetorical support of the CIC and its increasingly direct threats towards Ethiopian forces and Ugandan troops in Somalia. As

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the Eritreans square-off against their east African neighbors on the issue of Somalia, we anticipate added complexity and tension in the tangled web of relationships in this part of the Horn. End Comment.

DeLisi